

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks on the Situation in Ukraine

February 28, 2014

Good afternoon, everybody.

Over the last several days, the United States has been responding to events as they unfold in Ukraine. Now, throughout this crisis, we have been very clear about one fundamental principle: The Ukrainian people deserve the opportunity to determine their own future. Together with our European allies, we have urged an end to the violence and encouraged Ukrainians to pursue a course in which they stabilize their country, forge a broad-based government, and move to elections this spring.

I also spoke several days ago with President Putin, and my administration has been in daily communication with Russian officials, and we've made clear that they can be part of an international community's effort to support the stability and success of a united Ukraine going forward, which is not only in the interest of the people of Ukraine and the international community, but also in Russia's interest.

However, we are now deeply concerned by reports of military movements taken by the Russian Federation inside of Ukraine. Russia has a historic relationship with Ukraine, including cultural and economic ties and a military facility in Crimea, but any violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity would be deeply destabilizing, which is not in the interest of Ukraine, Russia, or Europe.

It would represent a profound interference in matters that must be determined by the Ukrainian people. It would be a clear violation of Russia's commitment to respect the independence and sovereignty and borders of Ukraine and of international laws. And just days after the world came to Russia for the Olympic Games, it would invite the condemnation of nations around the world. And indeed, the United States will stand with the international community in affirming that there will be costs for any military intervention in Ukraine.

The events of the past several months remind us of how difficult democracy can be in a country with deep divisions. But the Ukrainian people have also reminded us that human beings have a universal right to determine their own future.

Right now the situation remains very fluid. Vice President Biden just spoke with Prime Minister—the Prime Minister of Ukraine to assure him that in this difficult moment, the United States supports his government's efforts and stands for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic future of Ukraine. I also commend the Ukrainian Government's restraint and its commitment to uphold its international obligations.

We will continue to coordinate closely with our European allies, we will continue to communicate directly with the Russian Government, and we will continue to keep all of you in the press corps and the American people informed as events develop.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Prime Minister Arsenii Yatseniuk of Ukraine.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ukraine situation.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Yatseniuk, Arsenii.

Subjects: Russia : 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi; Russia : President; Sports : Olympic Games; Ukraine : Democracy efforts; Ukraine : International diplomatic efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; Ukraine : Prime Minister; Ukraine : Russia, role.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400125.